



THE JACG NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

If Dave Noyes looks or looked a little frazzled at the big September meeting, take pity on the poor man. First, he calls me this month to make sure that the newsletter will be on time for the big meeting. I say to him, "Well, Dave, I'll be on vacation out of town until a week before the meeting so I don't know how much I can do on the newsletter this month."

Poor Dave next calls the club's erstwhile president to make sure he will be ready for the possibly biggest meeting ever and Gary says to him, "Well, Dave, I'll be on vacation out of town for two weeks and won't be able to run the meeting."

Well, happily for Dave's sanity, I got back in time to put the newsletter together with much help from him. So when you see him, if he's not incoherently babbling to himself, be sure to thank him for all the work he did this month to get things ready for the big meeting.

On the newsletter front, I will be keeping all the issues I work on in electronic format on disk. So, if for some obscure reason you want a copy of the newsletter in PaperClip format on disk, just let me know.

And lastly, please send your articles to me instead of Dave Noyes, since it makes both of our jobs a lot easier. Thanks for everyone's help so far.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NEXT MEETING:

October 14th, 1989

Summer Madness for ST Owners !!!

Atari 520STfm\$ 499.95
512K Ram with built-in DS/DD
drive and Mouse

Atari SF314 Disk Drive 169.95
720K DS/DD External Drive

Atari SH305 30MB Hard Drive 499.95
Built-in Clock/Calendar, extra DMA
Port and Boot Sector program

Supra 2400 Baud Modem 139.95
Hayes Compatible 300/1200/2400

GEMINI 267-0988

171 Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown, NJ 07960

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Gary Gorski

Presidents Report

I want to take this time to thank all of the people who showed up this month for our Regional Atari meeting. One of my most pleasant tasks as President of the Jersey Atari Computer Group is to welcome the many many hundreds of Atari enthusiasts to Bell Labs every month. Over the years the JACG Executive Boards have taken pride in bringing you monthly meetings.

The current JACG Executive board, whose hard work and enthusiastic support makes this "Regional Meeting" possible. I hope that you have enjoyed this meeting half as much as we have had planning it.

On behalf of the entire Jersey Atari Computer Group, I would like to extend a warm WELCOME to all of you. Please feel free to join us, and help keep our enthusiastic spirit going.

Until next month, "happy computing"
!!!

Gary

NOISE FROM NOYES

by Dave Noyes

Following Past President Joe Kennedy's visit here a couple of meetings ago, Gary Gorski got a letter from Joe reminding him that mention should be given of the donation of an 8-bit 'Shanghai' game (unavailable here in the U.S.) from the 'Bit-Byter' user group in Germany (where Joe currently works) to the JACG for use as a door-prize. Joe, please consider this both 'mention' and grateful "thanks".

Joe also suggested that the JACG NEWSLETTER be given a name (other, of course, than "The JACG NEWSLETTER"). He further suggested that it be entitled "Frankly Speaking", to honor, in Joe's words, "The late Frank Pazel, the best newsletter editor the JACG ever had." Well, now that I am no longer the editor of the NEWSLETTER, I'll comment. First, I do not intend to give marks to any of the past editors; who were first, Dick Kushner, who edited 7 issues, then Art Leyenberger who edited 14 issues, then Frank who edited 33 issues, then me...I edited 36 issues, and finally to our current editor Dave Arlington. I personally don't dislike "The JACG NEWSLETTER" as a name, but I am not averse to changing it. I do not, however, think that the incorporation of any past or present editor's name, or that of any other personality, into the title of the publication is either necessary or recommended. There are other ways to honor people...such as "The Frank Pazel" award. I consider such a suggestion by Joe to be more than a little denigrating of the efforts of the other editors who did not have the luxury of a large membership from which to draw articles, and did not have the treasury resources available for photo-offset printing. Enough said...

ATARI SAFARI - JUNE 1989
by Michael Hochman

Once again our June meeting was the scene for JACG's annual ATARI SAFARI. The SAFARI provides the opportunity for some of the members to demo their favorite ATARI applications, gadgets, and modifications. Those not demonstrating are free to roam from one demo to another and ask questions and even operate and explore the equipment. Here is a run down of what was shown at the SAFARI.

Chester Freeman, of the South Shore Atari Group (Quincy MA) flaunted the power of the still very versatile ATARI 8-Bit line with his demo of "8-BIT MIDI". He was running "Midi Music System" V.1.0 by Synthetic Software of San Fransisco, CA. His equipment consisted of an 800XL with 256K, Commodore 1702 monitor, 1050 disk drive, and a Casio CT-630 hooked up to the system through a Midimate Interface.

Dave Arlington, JACG, flew around the the country without leaving the comfort of the auditorium with his "8-BIT FLIGHT SIMULATOR" demo. Dave ran "Flight Simulator II" and Scenery Disk 11 from SubLogic. Equipment included an 800XL, INDUS GT disk drive and Teknika monitor.

Joe Wyks, JACG, was proud to show his hardware hack "3 1/2 INCH DRIVE FOR 8-BIT". Joe ran SPARTA DOS 3.2 to utilize the enhanced density features of the Tandy 3 1/2 inch drive he daisy chained to his XF 551. I believe Joe was saying that ATARI DOS could not provide as high a formatted density on a diskette, hence his need to use SPARTA DOS. Also used was an 800XL and a GE television as a monitor.

Paul Machiaverna, JACG, showed real world interfacing with his "8-BIT MODEL RAILROAD INTERFACE (MRI)". Paul controlled an N-Scale railroad with software he wrote in BASIC XE through a Microport XL (port expander device) and finally a Digital to Analog convertor (also custom built by Paul). Status of

the railroad was displayed on a Commodore monitor hooked up to his 130XE with 1050 disk drive.

"SMALL BUSINESS APPLICATIONS" were shown by Shree Vardenberg (JACG) and Bill Desantis (JACG) of FUTURES. FUTURES specializes in small business applications and installations utilizing ATARI 8-bit and ST computers. They are the Eastern United States distributors of MicroMiser software products for the ATARI computers. Turbo Base was shown on a 130XE with 2 1050 drives and an ATARI CX85 Keypad and Magnavox TV/monitor. This is a package thats provides for business software requirements of Accounts Payable, Accounts Recieveable, General Ledger, and Payroll. Right next to this was the ST version of the software, Ultra Base +, running on a 1040 ST with SM124 Monitor.

All in all, I enjoyed being a spectator at this years SAFARI, but was dismayed at the lack of ST demos. I know of at least one demo (Ambrosia Software's "Radio Aircraft Software/Firmware/Hardware") that was not shown due to a last minute snafu. Where are you ST'ers?

For those of you who did not provide a demo, I must say that this is the best way for you to introduce yourself and get friendly with other JACG'ers that may share your same interests, be they hardware hacking, programming, simulations, business applications or gaming. On behalf of all the members of JACG, the JACG Executive Committee and anyone else who just happened to visit us that day, I would like to give our warmest thanks for a job well done by the demo'ers at this years ATARI SAFARI.

EXECUTIVE MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 5, 1989
J.A.C.G. SECRETARY
Michael D. Hochman

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM with Gary Gorski (President), Dave Noyes (VP 8-bit and Advertising), Mike Hochman (Secretary and Membership

Chairman) Sam Cory (8-bit Librarian) and Mike Hochman (Secretary) present and constituting a quorum. Former JACG Secretary Bob Mulhearn was present on an informational rather than official visit and was not involved in any committee vote.

In response to our dwindling membership (down 25 percent since November of 1988) the Executive Committee has come up with a plan based on alot of input from Dave Noyes and Sam Cory. Beginning with our September meeting, JACG will be offering TRIAL MEMBERSHIP program which will work as follows:

1. The cost of a single Trial Membership will be \$5.00.
2. Trial Membership will be open to NON-MEMBERS and MEMBERS WHOSE MEMBERSHIP HAS EXPIRED ONLY.
3. Trial Memberships will be issued at regular JACG meetings (2nd Saturday of each month) only.
4. Trial Period will be the period from date of issuance to the day prior to the next regular meeting. Trial Memberships issued on 9/9/89 will be valid through 10/13/89.
5. Trial Members have 2 options at the end of the trial membership. Join as a full member for 11 more months but at a cost reduced by the Trial Fee (\$20 3rd Class Mail, (\$26 1st Class Mail) or apply for another Trial Membership. Trial members will have 30 additional days after the Trial Membership period ends in which to take advantage of the reduced membership rate. You must submit the Trial membership card in exchange for a regular membership.
6. Upon issuance of a Trial Membership, member will receive a specially imprinted Membership Card, the latest copy of the JACG Newsletter and 4 back issues selected at random as a bonus. Trial members will be entitled to all benefits of regular membership including participation in meetings, flea markets, special

events, group discounts, access to the JACG BBS (with upload/download priveleges) and will be entitled to tickets for that meetings door prizes. Trial Members will also be entitled to additional door prize tickets for giving a Demo or submitting an article for the newsletter.

7. A Trial Member will never be entitled to any more than a Regular member.

8. All rules and entitlements of Trial Membership and the Trial Membership Program may be modified or discontinued at the discretion of the JACG in accordance with the Bylaws of the JACG.

On another note, the door prize drawings are going to change for the fairer. At each meeting, there will be 2 boxes in which you can place your ticket. You will choose if you want to have your ticket drawn for an 8-bit or 16-bit prize. I hear the prizes are not too shabby either. I know at least one ATARI 520 ST will be given away at the September meeting. Each Regular Member and Trial Member will be given three tickets for door prizes.

Finally, Septembers meeting will feature our long awaited special event. We will be visited by ATARI and ATARI User Groups from around our neck of the USA. Doors will open at 8:30 AM for our usual flea market and swap meet. At 9:30 Bob Mulhearn will host Questions and Answers in the Auditorium. The meeting will begin at 10:00 AM and should last no later than 1:00 PM. Gary will be sending news releases to all User Groups, BBS's and the media to provide additional hype for this super meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Secretary's Note: I love when people renew their subscriptions because it gives me the opportunity to meet them up close and discuss JACG. If there is something you'd like to see changed, included, or

improved, speak up. Member Martin J. Boyle recently renewed by mail and included a note, "What can be done to get a readable back cover on the newsletter?" Well Martin, that's been on the top of my list (I complain also), check out the upcoming issues.

The Master for the back page of the newsletter has been reworked and reprinted and I must say it looks great (I think Big Brother Charlie Miller pulled some hair on this effort). Charles Gerlinger writes, "If I renew retroactive to June '89, could I receive the June '89 issue of the newsletter?" Yes Sir, and thanks again for renewing your membership. See you all at the next meeting, please stop by and say hello.

MEGATOUCH Review
Megatouch, Regent Software
P.O. Box 14628
Long Beach, CA 90803-1208

List Price: \$11.95

Isn't it funny that if you win the JACG monthly meeting raffle, the prize is either something you already own, something you donated to the club, or the only prizes remaining won't run on your model ATARI. And it's always some other lucky stiff who wins the really great prizes (recently an 8-bitter won PageStream, a professional desktop publishing application for the 16-bit line). Well at long last I won the raffle, and the prize was something I had really wanted. Megatouch, the 520/1040 keyboard upgrade.

I do an awful lot of word processing at work and at home, and I've gotten use to that nice tactile clickety-click found on most MS-DOS clone keyboards. The new MEGA's have that touch but the pursuit of that delightful fingertip sensation does not warrant the purchase of a MEGA to replace my trusty 1-MEG 520 (at least that's what my wife tells me). Megatouch does not give you the sensation of the MEGA's keyboard, nor does Regent claim the product will do that. It does replace the mushy key feeling with a firmer touch.

Regardless, I was anxious to try out the product do to the disparity of the keyboards of my office and home computers.

Megatouch consists of tiny springs which you install under the keys of your 520 or 1040 ST, hence giving them the extra stiff feeling I described above. This installation requires the careful prying off of each key so that a spring can be put in place, and the eventual return of the keys, hopefully from the same place from which you yanked them. Megatouch comes with brief instructions and a diagram of the ST keyboard so you don't have to remember the positions of each key. Regent advises against the removal and springification of certain keys because they are difficult to remove, and are easily broken. In fact they are even harder to put back, as I can testify first hand. But you really should take Regent's advice because they do not give you ample springs to do the entire keyboard.

So how do I like Megatouch? Better yet, how "did" I like Megatouch? Frankly, I found the keys to be too stiff for my own taste. I am a touch typist and have a light touch as opposed to the finger bruising pokes and stabs required by the Megatouch modification. I also found keys to have varied stiffness. The "I" key was so stiff that none of the "I"s made it into the document. I had to poke so hard I nearly knocked my "I" out. One not so major complaint is that the darn little springs made a noticeable degree of squeak. Well after one short document, I decided that Megatouch just wasn't for me. I will redonate this door prize so that perhaps some will try it and be satisfied with the mod. Good luck all you hunt-and-peckers!!! For the adventurous who will attempt this modification, here are my tips for the installation of Megatouch:

1. Remove the top cover of the ST before attempting to pry off the keys. It only requires the removal of a few screws and makes the removal of the keys less traumatic to the machine and its owner.

2. Remove the keys from the outer rows and work your way inward, supporting one side of a key with your fingers while gently prying with a screwdriver.

3. While you have all the keys off, take the opportunity to give your ST a little TLC by cleaning out the dust that may have settled on the keyboard.

THE GAME OF GO By Lars Fuchs

My older brother once gave me a Go set for Christmas many years ago. Ever since then I've been trying to find people to play with. I occasionally feel like a zealot or a missionary, spreading the word of Go.

It's not fair to say that I've become an expert; far from it, in fact. But I knew from the first game I ever played that this was a game I would always love.

I'm no rocket scientist, and have never been all that keen on the traditional chess game. Unfortunately my mind isn't so very disciplined. But while Go requires a great deal of mental fortitude, it transcends purely analytical thought. Go is very beautiful. It appeals strongly to my aesthetic sense.

The game itself has few rules. Only one, and two special cases. Thus it is remarkably easy to get started. The beauty, and the fun, develop from the infinitely complex patterns that arise out of this simplicity. I am reminded of Fractal Geometry by this, in the way the infinitely beautiful objects can be created by such simple processes. Except with GO, these patterns live in the minds of the players, and as I play more, I become aware of further and further levels at which I can perceive the play of the game.

Enough of the zeal: down to brass tacks. The actual game of Go was invented in China about 4000 years ago. While it is still played there a great

deal, it is in Japan where Go reigns. The Japanese are absolutely wild about the game, and they produce all the Masters of Go.

It is played on a 19 x 19 grid using the intersections and not the interstices of the grid. The goal is to surround and capture more territory (intersections) than your opponent. And since the space available is finite, competition is sly, wily, and fierce. Needless to say, occasional violence erupts, and men are killed (or, in polite company, "taken prisoner").

Go has a simple scheme for handicapping, and can be played on a scaled-down 13 x 13 version. I hope that the JACG might start up a kind of GO-SIG, where members could play by messages on the BBS. This way everybody could follow the progress of other games, and even comment on them when they're over.

I'm developing a program that will track games and display their histories on screen.

If anyone is interested, send me a SASE with enough postage for about 10 xeroxed pages with pictures or an Atariwriter disk (and hopefully the game-tracker program). As soon as some bugs are worked out, I will upload the Atariwriter files to the BBS.

I can be reached at 75 Van Reypen st. #2, Jersey City, NJ, 07306-4409. (201)435-6561.

Let's Play GO!

GAUNTLET The Deeper Dungeons - REVIEW by Neil Van Oost Jr., JACG

I never could quite get the hang of surviving in "Gauntlet". For some reason or another it always seemed as if a Lobber would catch me between the eyes, with a lucky throw or the Grunts would gang up on me or Death would sneak up behind me when I didn't have a potion to protect myself. And so I usually met my demise around screen twelve.

Being a glutton for punishment, I grabbed up a copy of "Deeper Dungeons" which was for sale in the flea market area before last month's meeting. Much to my surprise, I found "Deeper Dungeons" more enjoyable to play. This was probably due to the fact that I am able to survive to well past screen thirty.

Loading the "Gauntlet" supplement is very easy, all you do is substitute the "Deeper Dungeons" disk when side two is asked for. There are no special instructions, just grab a key and unlock your way into fighting your favorite 'Villains'. They are all there, the Ghosts, Grunts, Demons, Lobbers, Sorcerers, and that most dreaded villain of all; 'DEATH'. And you will find them in an amazing 512 new dungeons.

You will notice in the "Deeper Dungeons" that you will be able to acquire hit points more readily. You will also find that food plates and cider are not always reliable, it seems that someone has been going around poisoning them. Upon occasion you may find that when you exit to the next dungeon, you are in a blind alley with no place to go. When this happens just hope you have enough hit points to wait out the time-out period, when the walls all turn to exits. One strange thing I have found is that when I have a couple of potions in my inventory, in the heat of battle they disappear. I think someone is stealing them.

All in all, I found "Gauntlet, The Deeper Dungeons" a very nice addition to my gaming library. Fifteen minutes into this game, after a particularly hectic day at work, and you will forget all your worldly problems. Only one thing will remain bright in your mind — CAN I SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO GET TO THE NEXT LEVEL!

HARD DISK

by Neil Van Oost Jr., JACG

To hard disk or not to hard disk!? That was the question that faced me

several months ago. I had been putting off answering that question for quite awhile. I had been telling myself all kinds of reasons for not buying a hard disk for my 8 bit 130XE. Some of them were; too expensive — you could buy a basic 286 system for the cost of expanding your 8 bit machine, you will not use it enough to justify the cost, its just as easy to find that program on floppy — yes, lots of reasons not to buy.

Well I finally took the plunge, it was an education. I work with and repair various computer systems at work but up until a couple of months ago all my expertise with hard drives was of the larger Digital RLO2 type. You know the kind — smaller than a house, but bigger than a VW. I could tear one of those suckers apart and put it together blindfolded. But the kind I was contemplating buying was a horse of a different color. You just can't go around tearing into one of those 3 1/2 inch HD's.

Anyway to make a long story short, I went down to Toms River, NJ to visit my friend Dan Dismuke. He runs Tressels Data Systems out of his house. He also runs the Smart Station BBS (201-506-7530). The reason for my visit was to look over his hard disk and more or less see what it was all about. He gave me a disk full of text files written by HDUG - The Hard Disk's User's Group. He also told me to pass along that these files could be accessed in the data base section of his BBS.

After reading through the HDUG text files and seeing Dan's system, I decided to buy one. He gave me a price on putting together a hard disk system and I gave him the go ahead to do the job for me. The system consists of an adapter board which you need for the 130XE but do not for the 800XL, and ICD Multi I/O(MIO) interface, a power supply and shoe box type case, an Adaptec HD controller card and Miniscribe 3 1/2 inch 20 MB hard drive. The HD and controller go in the shoe box with the power supply and are connected to the MIO via a 50 wire

ribbon cable.

After a couple of months of using my newly configured system, which runs on Sparta 3.2d DOS, I can make the following statements. It was expensive, I will not deny that. But another way of looking at it, is that if I had purchased a 16 bit system, it still would have cost a lot to put a hard disk on it. The speed of loading programs and saving to HD is fast. Just a mite slower than RAM but lots faster than a 1050 operating at fast speed with a Doubler or Happy installed. It's great to have 1500 or so files accessible at just the touch of a couple of keys. Even being selective in loading up my HD — 20 MB is not enough space. That's one of Murphy's laws.

There were a couple of extra's I had not figured on. When you purchase the MIO (256K or 1 meg version) you have not only purchased a HD interface, but also a modem interface, printer interface, print spooler, and RAM disk. One program which I run once a year to index all my computer files and disks takes 9765 single density disk sectors. Running this program using four drives and 128k RAM disk on my 800 takes me over 30 hours. With all the files residing on my hard drive, I cut the time to sort and merge all the data in half. A good reason alone for buying the HD.

Now I love my HD and am currently looking for a second drive to put in my shoe box and probably in the near future I will upgrade to Sparta X as that will handle 1500 files in each directory instead of the 128 which Sparta 3.2d handles. If you are contemplating expanding your 8 bit system to encompass a hard drive I would suggest that you log onto the Smart Station BBS and download the HDUG files, they are a wealth of information and tell you 99.9% of everything you will need to know before you purchase your hard drive.

8-BIT LIBRARIAN'S REPORT
by Sam Cory, JACG

Since this newsletter will have a wide circulation, it moves me to summarize newer large BBS options.. What does this have to do with a disk library? They are master libraries you need we could not emulate nohow.

Latest is "GATEWAY" a Bell of Pa. operation. They have just started and will have over 30 databases. All you have to do is call 1-800-543-8843. A one time \$5.00 fee gets you on the system. Once you are registered with the system you are only charged a 5 cents per minute access charge. If you are in the 215, or 302 area codes, the phone calls are free. They plan to expand to the entire Bell of Pa area. As their name indicates they serve as a multiple gateway.

Another is "TYMNET" which is free? They act as a connection service between you and your Host (paid by that host) such as Genie, CompuServe, or whomever. All you need is an I.D. with the host and an I.D. with TYMNET gotten through 1-800-336-0149. For me, they are no help. My Genie connection is free. If I went through TYMNET as a Morristown connection it would cost. Try them. They may save money. They also could give cleaner lines.

One I contacted Aug 1988 is called "SENIOR NET". Pacific Tel is the sponsor. Unlike the others it had a sysop who was one of us 8-bit. They planned to have a nationwide network (already had 12 sites) for senior citizens to be able to connect all over the US through their satellites. These are put into establishments which can supply personnel time to maintain the Net. They supply at reduced price, equipment for the site and setup operational requirements. They were contacted at 1-800-415-666-6505. I will get back to them to see how they are doing.

Lastly is "LEARNING LINK NJ" which I both wrote about and put the info into 8 bit disk JACG#194F. It is a free modem call from and to any NJ phone using an 800 tel call. The cost is \$40 a year starting July 1st. You automatically become a member of NJN

(TV Chnl 50). Every month I receive their program guide. Call them at 1-609-530-5252.

Why all this? I see a trend toward massive information services linked all over the world very soon. You have seen the "PRODIGY" ads. Doug Van Hook and family use it regularly. Well, LEARNING LINK NJ has a menu item called Gateway soon to be opened to other services. The US Dept of Agriculture now has a service from the National Arboretum where you can identify plants which grow well in your area (some 30,000 presently listed). This is modem available. In less than 8 years, expect to have a HDTV interfaced computer to access many of the above and through fiber optics. Notice a number of TV ads touting total fiber optics now. Just read of a housing development where all homes are interfaced by fiber optics - getting closer faster isn't it? The picture phone will be common in that development.

NO disk of the month this month? Too much going on at the meeting? Anyone know of other services like these? Let me know. Note most of the 8 bit library is now double sided.. NOTICE the NEW LIST. NOTICE most of the numbers have been filled between 147-170. Who said there isn't a disk of the month. All these at \$2.00 for our regular and "TRIAL" members. ALL others pay \$6. UGH! Just think: 2 nonmember disks at \$6 = \$12. 2 member disks at \$2 = \$4. The \$8 saved will pay for a trial membership (\$5) with \$3 in your pocket and chances for the DOOR PRIZES!!!!

Sam Cory, Disk Librarian

MUSINGS ON A FIELD TRIP By Dave Arlington, JACG

If you read the front cover, you will notice I was on vacation for part of this month. During that time I picked up some Atari goodies and had some reflections on Atari support in general.

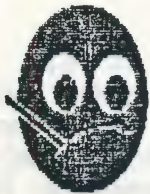
For vacation, we went back to Buffalo to visit relatives. Now let me tell you something about user groups and Atari support in Buffalo. At one time, we had a very large user group there with 300+ members. Many stores carried Atari goods and there were at least two Atari-only stores. Things were great for Atarians.

Then the ST came along, and unlike the JACG, but like many other user groups across the country, a schism developed that eventually led to the user group breaking into two separate entities. What happened is something that the JACG reflects; That even though the ST and 8-bits are two completely different machines, united Atari support is a very necessary commodity.

I could find hardly any stores that carried Atari software. Even the major carriers of a couple years ago had either gone out of business or greatly reduced their Atari support. I was laughed out of Electronics Boutique when I asked about Atari software. By no coincidence, both user groups are barely limping along, hardly surviving.

Now you can look at this chicken and egg situation either way, but I believe it was the separation and failing of the user groups that led to the dreary Atari retail situation in Buffalo.

To me, it proves a very valuable reason for continuing a very healthy JACG like we have. It shows retailers in the northern New Jersey area that Atari supporters still exist and are a viable consumer base to cater to. So, the next time you stop at Gemini or somewhere, be sure to mention how the user group influenced your latest purchase. I would never want the great situation we have here (comparitively speaking) to deteriorate into the same thing that happened in Buffalo.



HUMOR

UNRELEASED ATARI LANGUAGES

by Dave Arlington

If you've ever written a program to completion, you're aware of the fact that your final finished version is never the same version you started with. Usually your program undergoes many changes until it sees the light of day. The same thing is true with many of the programming languages available for the ATARI these days. There are many available, but have you ever read the inside story of the unreleased prior versions of these languages? Here are the little-known predecessors to some of the more popular ATARI Programming languages.

BASIC 2600 - Everyone knows about the excellent products from OSS, including BASIC XL and BASIC XE that take advantage of the untapped potential of these machines. However, long before those was the embryonic BASIC 2600 for the ATARI 2600 VCS. If you ever wondered how they achieved those excellent graphics in the ATARI 2600 version of PACMAN, you need wonder no longer.

REACTION! - Speaking of OSS, this is the predecessor to the marvelous ACTION! language. ACTION! is advertised as incorporating the best features of C, PASCAL, ALGOL, and ADA. REACTION! contained the worst features of BASIC, LOGO, and PILOT. Best of all, it came only on cassette! This language was never released due to the fact that the first program written in it is still running!

SLOBBO BASIC - This is the predecessor to TURBO BASIC. Everyone knows structured programming using procedures and subroutines is for quiche-eating pantywaists and sissies. REAL programmers just sit down at the keyboard and hack away.

The distinguishing feature of SLOBBO BASIC is the fact that there are NO subroutines or GOSUBS. Not only that but every line MUST start with a GOTO. The first time a computer encounters a line, it executes the GOTO. If it encounters the line as the result of a GOTO, it executes the statement on the same line after the GOTO, including more GOTOs. REAL programmers really liked SLOBBO BASIC as they found no one ever could follow their code.

In fact, one of the biggest proponents of SLOBBO BASIC was ANTIC Magazine. A spokesman for ANTIC magazine relates, "First, we ban all our programs from BBSs. Then with SLOBBO BASIC, we could have type-in listings that no one COULD EVER de-bug. Then they'd have to buy our disks! HAHA! Then we can

proceed on our plan for world domination! HAHA!.... Oh, sorry, lost my head there for a minute!"

FIG-NEWTON THIRD - This is the predecessor to FIG-FORTH. Most people know FORTH uses Reverse-Polish notation, a very confusing stack-based system where operators like +, -, /, come before the numbers. THIRD uses a system called Reverse-Hebrew notation where the numbers are read left to right and have the operators in the middle like: 3 * 4 = 12. THIRD was dropped from serious consideration when it was discovered people could actually learn how to program in it.

B - The predecessor to C. This was the first attempt to make a truly portable language that was independent of any type of system hardware. Unfortunately, it was so independent, that you couldn't see anything on your monitor and couldn't type anything into it via the keyboard. But boy, was it fast! Trust me!

ADDLF - The predecessor to PASCAL. This language was so strongly-typed that you had to DECLARE when you were going to turn on the computer and then DECLARE all your intentions before it would even let you boot it! Variables had to have their identification cards with them at all times and were under strict curfew. Any attempt at unstructured programming resulted in the immediate execution of the weak-minded programmer. Heavy losses in the development stage prevented this language from ever being completed.

SLOGO - This was the predecessor to LOGO. Produced by the ACME Silly Invention Co., and invented by one Mr. W. E. Coyote, this language's most interesting feature was the unique ROADRUNNER graphics package. This graphics package made it very easy to draw Fractal canyons, tunnels on cave walls, catapults, rocket sleds, giant springs and the like. Unfortunately, two things hampered this language. First, this language only operates at a speed of 35 MegaHertz, a tad bit faster than the 8-bit's 1.79 MegaHertz speed. The second problem was the annoying BEEP! BEEP! sound that accompanied every error message.

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GFA
Class 4

We'll move on now to several commands that are very necessary in any programming environment. Lets begin with two simple and easy yet very powerful and time saving commands, SGET and SPUT. They stand for 'Screen Get' and 'Screen Put' respectively and all they do is copy the entire screen into a character string variable for use later in your program. The advantage here is speed as the whole screen can be almost instantly saved or replaced but the disadvantage is that each screen you reserve with SGET uses 32K of memory. Example (EX41):

```
Deftext 1,5,0,32 Text 220,70,"Screen #1"
Sget Screen1$ Pause 50 Cls Text
220,130,"Screen #2" Sget Screen2$ Pause
50 @Flip_them Edit ' Procedure Flip_them
Repeat Hidem For X=30 Downto 1 Vsync Sput
Screen1$ Pause X Vsync Sput Screen2$
Pause X Exit If Mousek<>0 Next X Until
Mousek<>0 Showm Return
```

If you don't need the entire screen copied into a variable, you could use the GET and PUT commands to copy just a selected portion of the screen into a variable. Usage is: GET A,B,C,D TEMP\$ where A and B are the upper left horizontal and vertical pixel locations, C and D are the lower right hand corner pixel locations and TEMP\$ is the character string variable you supply to hold that particular section of the screen. Usage of the PUT command is exactly the same except you only need provide the A and B locations and of course it places the variable TEMP\$ at the locations you provide. Lets look at an example (EX42):

```
Circle 320,30,25 Get 294,4,346,56,Temp$
Pause 50 Put 50,50,Temp$ Pause 50 Put
100,100,Temp$ Pause 50 Put 400,150,Temp$
Pause 200 Edit
```

Two other commands that are very easy to use are DATE\$ and TIME\$. They simply provide you with the date and time as

your ST currently has it (i.e. if you don't have a clock or haven't set the time via the CONTROL.ACC, you'll probably show Nov 25, 1985). No additional items are needed with either command so they're use is easy. Example (EX43):

```
Print At(25,11);"Current time is
";Time$;" " Print At(25,12);"Today's date
is ";Date$;" " Pause 200 Edit
```

Another frequently used routine we need to learn is the 'READ...DATA' routine. When you use the READ command, you use any variable you choose and you're telling your program to READ the value of that variable from a list you provide in a DATA statement. You MUST be sure to use the correct type of variable to read the type of data you're using. If you tell the program to READ X, be sure you only have numeric values in your DATA statement. If you tell it to READ X\$, then you may use characters or whatever in your DATA statement. Example (EX44):

```
For A=1 To 10 Read X Print At(23,12);"The
value of 'X' is now ";X;"..." Pause 50
Next A Edit Data
10,20,30,40,50,60,70,80,90,100
```

If we wanted to use some of our variables again, we could issue the RESTORE command which tells GFA that it can start back at the first DATA item the next time we issue a READ command. For example (EX45):

```
For A=1 To 10 Read X$ Print
At(28,11);"Hello ";X$;" ! " Pause 100 If
A=5 Then Print At(20,11);"Returning to
first 'DATA' value..." Pause 200 Cls
Restore Endif Next A Data
Celia,Robert,Gordon,Hobart,Joe,Tom,Brett,
Andy
```

*** Please notice that even though we supply 8 ***

names (data items), the routine only uses 5 of them because the RESTORE command sets the next READ back to the first DATA item.

Okay, now to move on. So far we've been

using the EDIT command in our examples to return us to the editor without having to click on the 'RETURN' box but when we actually write a program we can't end it that way. We need to know how to properly exit to the GEM desktop. There are several GFA commands that allow this, END closes all open files and terminates your programs execution. STOP will stop your program but if you're working with open disk files, it will not close those files (you may continue from the point you stopped by issuing the CONT command - stands for continue). QUIT and SYSTEM are another 2 commands to terminate your program and like END they will also close all open files but the big difference is that both of these will return you to the GEM desktop, even if you're using GFA. END will return you to the editor. (Sorry, no example here, type QUIT or SYSTEM while in GFA and run them to see what they do 8-) ...) Another helpful command is FRE(0). It reports the amount of free RAM available to you for GFAs' use at any given time. If you're writing a program it can help you determine how much memory you're using so you can make sure your program will function properly on any ST (i.e. a 520 ST with 512K of RAM). Here's an example of how to use it (EX46):

```
X%-Fre(0) Print X% Pause 100 Sget
Screen1$ X%-Fre(0) Print X% Pause 100
Edit
```

There's also a command to let you know how much free space is on the disk you're using and that's the DFREE command. Usage is DFREE(X) where X is the value of the drive you want to check the free space on. X may be between 0 and 15 and 0 stands for the default disk, 1 is for drive A:, 2 is for drive B:, etc on up to 15. Example (EX47):

```
X%-Dfree(1) Print X% Pause 200 Edit
```

To see what files are actually on a disk there are two different commands you may use. One is FILES and the other is DIR. Both commands allow the conventional use of wildcards (?) and (*) and usage is FILES

"A:*.*)" or FILES "A:\TEST*.BAS" or DIR "A:*.LST" etc. The difference between the two is the FILES command not only shows you the name of the files but also their creation dates and the file size while the DIR command only shows the names of the files. You may direct the output of either of these commands to other than the screen (for example to a file on disk in ASCII format) by specifying a TO file. FILES "A:*.*)" to "A:XXX.XXX" or DIR "A:*.BAS" TO "A:GFA.DAT" etc. If you wanted, you may also direct the output to a printer by specifying "LST:" as the TO device. Ever want to know how to zip off some disk labels? Example (EX48):

```
Files "A:*.*)" Pause 300 Dir "A:*.*)" Pause
300 Edit
```

Other available commands to manipulate disk files are MKDIR and RMDIR for the 'make directory' and 'remove directory' functions. Usage is similar to DIR and FILES in that you must specify complete paths etc. MKDIR "A:\TEST" makes a directory (folder) on drive A: called 'TEST'. RMDIR "A:\TEST" removes a directory (folder) from drive A: called 'TEST'. You may also change your current path by switching into and out of directories (folders) by issuing the CHDIR command. Its' use is similar to the other disk type commands in that you must issue the pathname you want to change to. Usage is CHDIR "A:\TEST" to change to a folder called 'TEST' or CHDIR "\" to move back to the root directory of the disk you're using. To find out what directory you're currently in you may use the DIR\$ command as follows: DIR\$(x) where x may be 0-15 to represent the drive number (same as the DFREE command). If you have more than one drive connected and online, you can change drives by using the CHDRIVE command as follows: CHDRIVE X where x may again be 0-15 to tell GFA what drive to switch to. You may also rename files on disk by using the NAME command as follows: NAME "A:OLDFILE" AS "A:NEWFILE". Another helpful command to see if a file already exists on disk is the EXIST command used as follows: EXIST("Filename"). A value of -1 is

returned if the condition is true (if the file exists) and a condition of 0 is returned if the condition is false. You may also delete a disk file with the KILL command as follows: KILL "A:TEST". You can use wildcards (? and *) to specify which files to delete but be careful! Okay, we've just had a lot of reading so lets do an example to show us all these various things in use (EX49):

```
Rem Short disk files routines Chdrive 1
Print "Creating a file on disk called
'TEST'" Files "A:*.*)" To "A:TEST" !Put
list in file 'A:TEST' Print
At(25,12);"Press any key for a directory
of A:" Key=Inp(2) Cls Dir "A:*.*)"
!Directory to the screen Print
X%=Dfree(1) Print "There are ";X%;" bytes
available" Print At(26,24);"Press any key
to continue..." Key=Inp(2) Cls Print "Now
creating a directory (folder) called
'TESTDIR'" Mkdir "A:\TESTDIR" Chdir
"A:\TESTDIR" Cls Print "Now in the
directory we just made..." Files "A:*.*)"
```

```
Pause 150 Chdir "A:\" Cls Print "Now back
in the root directory..." Files "A:*.*)"
Print Print "Notice our new directory
called 'TESTDIR'?" Print "(Press a key
when ready)" Key=Inp(2) Cls Print "Now
copying our 'TEST' file to our new
directory" If Exist("A:TEST") Then Name
"A:TEST" As "A:\TESTDIR\TEST" Endif Cls
Print "Here's a directory of what's in
our folder now..." Files "A:\TESTDIR\*.*)"
Pause 100 Kill "A:\TESTDIR\TEST" Cls
Print "Just killed our test file, here's
another directory" Files "A:\TESTDIR\*.*)"
Pause 100 Rmdir "A:\TESTDIR" Cls Print
"Just removed our directory, see?" Files
"A:*.*)" Print Print At(26,23);"Press any
key to continue..." Key=Inp(2) Edit
```

That's it for this lesson. Remember that practice makes perfect and the only way we all get any better is using all of these enough to at least be familiar with what they can do!

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September 1989

Vol. 1 No. 7

The Future of AtariFests?

by John Nagy

Glendale Atarifest: CANCELLED.

San Jose World of Atari: CANCELLED.

Atari owners are wondering what will happen next as charges are made of interference, failure to coordinate, insensitivity to user groups, and unrealistic expectations of vendors. ZMagazine/Z*NET and ST-IN FORMER magazines hope to help user groups get back on track with their own shows.

The Southern California Atarifest tradition - the Glendale Atarifest - was cancelled this year by organizer John King Tarpinian. This user group show set the pattern for successful fests nationwide in three previous years, but this year it was unable to generate enough vendor and developer support to make happen. Although a conflict in hall scheduling was perhaps the last straw, when John pulled the plug only a month before the scheduled show date, only four vendors of any kind had sent deposits confirming their participation. By that stage in prior years, over 20 had been in hand. What was wrong? The problem may have been that ST-WORLD magazine publisher and World Of Atari promoter Rich Tsukiji had recently added a World of Atari show into his schedule for San Jose, two hundred miles up the coast near San Francisco, for only a week later. Some user group leaders called "foul", saying that this forced vendors to choose between the commercial and user show. While it might have seemed that 200 miles was plenty separation to avoid hitting many of the same likely attendees, a week between shows was much too little time for most vendors to attend both West coast shows. Worse yet, another show (WAACE in Washington D.C.) was the NEXT weekend. And with the World shows promising Atari backing, professional promotion budgets, and substantial discounts for vendors who attend all of the WOA shows, those who don't have the staff and budget for a continuous road show simply had to choose... and Glendale was losing fast.

The conflict in California was not new, but was

even worse than the MACE/Dearborn WOA conflict earlier this summer. In the case of Michigan, the World show (the second in the tour) was scheduled almost seven months in advance, and announced more than a month before the MACE user group of Detroit formally approved their show, to be held only miles from the WOA site and six weeks before it. That show brought a lot of pressure and attention to the professional show versus user group show issue. Fortunately, both Michigan shows were reasonably successful, and Tsukiji made commitments to only take future WOA shows where the user groups ASKED for them, places that would not otherwise have an Atarifest.

Next, World of Atari moved to Dallas, Texas for a mid August show, the third in the series. This was a site of successful locally produced multi-computer brand shows as well as several Atarifests in previous years, but the clubs in the area were not even contacted before the show was scheduled, let alone consulted. Attempts by Dallas groups to make suggestions or become involved went unanswered as ST-World and Tsukiji went phone-silent for two weeks in July, worrying even Atari officials who could not schedule their own involvement. The last word we heard from area representatives was that Dallas groups were puzzled at being left in the dark, getting more information from distant callers who assumed they would be involved than from ST World. Of three Dallas area user groups, the single one that Tsukiji identified as "involved", Atari Users of North Texas has no actual plans for any group involvement. Some of their members expect to volunteer to help the show now that a local dealer has passed them show fliers- only one week before the show. Club officers express concerns over the lack of local promotion, and say that the groups should have been given some options early in the planning. Tsukiji confirmed that there will be NO user groups having booths at the show. Press time has ar-

Continued on page 7...

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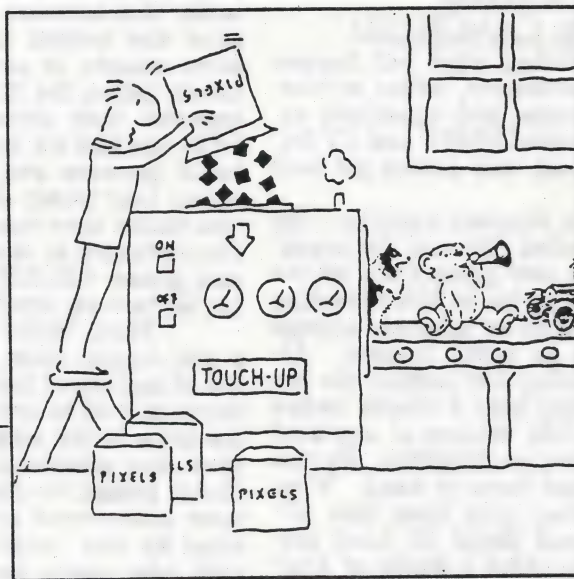
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Z*Net NewsWire



Atari finally announced their "TT" 68030 based system at a huge Atari specific show in Dusseldorf, West Germany. The Atari TT will run both Unix and TOS, but will be released with TOS first with Unix to be added in a few months. The TT will be available overseas almost immediately, with US distribution to start after FCC approval. Price? Under \$2,000 - maybe. The Atari ST-Plus, a 68000 or 68020 system with 4,096 colors and stereo sound, will probably be introduced and shipped this fall or winter.

Major advertising power CHIAT/DAY, the folks who introduced the MAC to the world with their "1984" ad campaign, are going to handle the planned fall blitz by Atari. There is plenty to tell the world about, as we all know. Meanwhile, Atari stock keeps a climb going, nearing \$10 a share at press time.

The \$400 Atari Portfolio hand held computer is already in release in Europe and selling well. It is in the final stages of U.S. preparation for market and may appear at any moment. The STACY laptop ST is not progressing as quickly and may be another month or two before distribution. Conner Peripherals announced last week that Atari is buying a supply of their low-profile 20 and 40 meg 3.5 inch disk drives for the STACY.

SOFTLOGIC, makers of PAGESTREAM desktop publishing software for the ST and Amiga, had a BOMB SCARE last month. A device was found and removed by police according to St. Louis newspapers. The bomb arrived in the mail, addressed to a SoftLogic employee who had been fired a few days earlier. It was believed that the former employee may have been involved in sending the bomb, and police were also seeking a third party who was thought to have built or supplied the bomb.

What version of PAGESTREAM do YOU have? In what just could be a problem related to the employee disagreement, at least one copy of PageStream at a Southern California Atari Dealer was found to be version 1.58... odd, considering that 1.52 is the current commercial version. SoftLogic representatives claim that this is simply impossible. Version 1.58 is an internal BETA version, and is not even

planned for release, as 1.60 is expected to be the next public update. You might check with your local dealers and help find how widespread the version leak might be.

VIRUS ALERT: A mischief-variety virus was making the rounds in Public Domain disks at the Dearborn World of Atari show. It causes the mouse to mix up for down every fifth disk swap... watch for it, it is being found in Canada too, and may have migrated here from there originally. When cleaning up this virus, some libraries discovered that they also had a "key virus" on some disks, which has potential for considerable destruction. Take no chances, every time you trade disks or get anything but factory original unopened software, check and clear the disks of Viruses. There are several programs available in the public domain to do this, and probably the best known is called VKILLER.

All signs point to the end of the 520ST. In July, Atari sold a large number of units to PRICE CLUB, a national super-discounter, in what has the earmarks of a factory close-out. Price Club is offering them at a mere \$349 AND including a bundle of 20 (public domain) games, billing it as the "Super ST Game Machine". The deal has upset established Atari dealers who actually have to pay a dealer cost of over \$400 for the same machine. Some price rebating arrangements have put out the fire, but many are still questioning the matter as a severe breach of dealer relation ethics.

In Europe, if you buy a 520ST you will receive a free package of 18 popular commercial ST games; Outrun, Pacmania, Gauntlet, R-type, Super Hang-On, The Black Lamp, Bombuzal, and more. The Euro-ST comes with 720K drive, Omnicron Basic, ST Basic, and the 18 games for only \$500. The software sold alone totals \$750.00.

Keith Ledbetter has shipped the first batch of EXPRESS! terminal cartridges. The stackable cart for the 8-bit Atari gives unparalleled power in an instant-load package. A disk drive is not even required for simple terminal use with any standard Hayes-compatible modem. It sports numerous batch transfer protocols at speeds up to 19,200 baud and will also work on Atari 1030, XM301, and SX212 direct con-

nect modems. Featuring windows and dropdown menus (although NOT using a mouse), it is quite easy to use. \$69.95, Orion Microsystems, 2211 Planters Row Drive, Midlothian, VA 23113.

Atari's recently hired User Group Coordinator, Chris Roberts, was fired in late July. Problems grew from Chris's willingness to talk to almost anyone about things that were either sensitive internally or not ready for public release, as well as from his propensity for re-adjusting stories between conversations. ... As we go to press, we have received word that Robert Brodie, President of ACAOC (a Z*Net group) in Orange County, California, has been hired as Atari's new User Group Coordinator. Bob has been a regular contributor for Z*Net and STZ*Mag over the past year. We think he'll do a great job and we wish him success.

Also gone in July is Atari VP of Marketing, Joe Mendolia, who reportedly resigned for personal reasons. Those of us who talked at length with Joe will miss his enthusiasm and realistic approach to presenting the Atari line. No replacement has been announced yet.

Shows: WAACE is presenting an Atarifest October 7 and 8 at the Fairfax High School in Fairfax, Virginia. Washington DC area Atarifests have a good reputation for success and crowds. Also, the Kentuckiana Atari Fest is planned for Clarksville, Indiana on October 28-29. A mile out of Louisville, Kentucky, the user group show will be at the Clarksville Sheraton Lakeview. Atari is planning to send representatives to both shows.

ISD Marketing announced a new upgraded Calamus to be available this fall. Version 1.1 has many new features and is modular, allowing memory management in smaller machines by loading only what you need to use. Irregular text flow-around, rotation of graphics, condensed and expanded font control, and transportable clipboards highlight a long list of improvements. ISD also declared positively that Calamus will be released for the IBM and MAC platforms sometime next year. ISD Marketing, Markham, Ontario, L3R 2W5, (416) 479-1880. ●



Supporting Atari 8-Bit Users

RATTY'S RAP

by Matthew Ratcliff (Mat*Mat)



Here is my latest experience with the Action! programming language, the language I LOVE to HATE!

Take a look at this piece of code:

```
BYTE ARRAY StringThing = "This is stuff"
INCLUDE "D4:SYSALL.ACT"
```

Guess what happens when you compile that? You ALWAYS get error 170. Why? Because the Action! compiler looks on drive 1 for SYSALL.ACT instead of drive 4 as specified. Change it to:

```
BYTE ARRAY StringThing = "This is stuff"
BYTE FRED
```

;or other declarations that aren't initialized strings

```
INCLUDE "D4:SYSALL.ACT"
```

Voila! It works. Now, why doesn't THIS work?

```
TYPE MyRecord = [ CARD Points BYTE POINTER X, Y ]
```

I always get an error 6 on the BYTE POINTER? Can't a pointer be part of a record? What's the deal? A byte pointer is the same size as a CARD. So, I do this:

```
TYPE MyRecord = [ CARD Points, X, Y ]
```

Now, how do I use X and Y as pointers instead of cardinals?

Has anyone ever noticed how poorly organized the Action! documentation is? I'm going insane here. I finally took Craig's advice and put tabs at the beginning of every important section of the manual (except for the error section - I've GOT to remedy that). Now I find things more easily, but golly - where are the examples? I'm going berzerk here. I'm about this close [] to running my action cartridge through the garbage disposal and whipping out Mac65. However, the size of my current project is a bit daunting from a 6502 assembly language perspective.

HELLLLPPPP ????? Where are you action gurus? Where are examples? Why isn't there an ACTION! topic in the data libraries here? Arggggggggggggggggg..... 'poof' (oops, my mind just went up in smoke)

... And so it was last week on GENIE, when I was going nuts trying to figure out how to load a large data file from disk and create an array of pointers to each record. As it turns out, CARDS can be treated as POINTERS any time you like. Action! doesn't much care. Craig S. Thom, of ICD, was very helpful in getting me up to speed in Action!, and I got my program running in just a few days.

Action! is a superb, terribly under-rated language. Why? First, the manual. I'm certain a lot of people purchased Action! with the intention of learning a new "high level" language, only to be intimidated and frustrated by the poorly organized and confusing documentation. There is no index. There is no ONE table of contents, but rather one for each section of the book. There is no alphabetical listing of all the functions and procedures for the language. I'm certain Action! becomes a rather harrowing experience for many newcomers. It drove me nuts, and I'm fluent in more programming languages than some software corporations!

The other problem is a runtime library. What's that?, you ask. Exactly. The manual doesn't make it very clear that your Action! programs aren't much good to you without the Action! cartridge installed. For an extra \$30 or so you can acquire a "run time library" from ICD or download a public domain version from GENIE or CompuServe. When you "INCLUDE" this file, all of the system calls made to the Ac-

tion! cartridge are replaced by calls to in line assembly code. The resultant program file is no longer dependant up on the cartridge for anything. These programs may be loaded and run from DOS, without the assistance of the Action! cartridge, and may be exchanged with friends.

Action! needs a new manual. Maybe I'll write one. I haven't decided, but something needs to be done. Action! is better than any disk based C or Pascal compiler for the 8bit Ataris (though I must admit to not having tested Kyan Pascal). If you learn Action! and pursue structured programming techniques and good coding style, you will have few problems moving up to a "real" high level language such as C or Pascal when you move on to an IBM, MacIntosh, or Atari ST and more sophisticated programming assignments in the future. I will be looking at Action! more in future installments of Ratty's Rap, and may provide a few tutorials along the way. Analog doesn't think very many people are interested in the language, and does not want a column on the subject. Well, I plan to get all you latent Action! gurus fired up, and change that! I suggest that we start a revolt and REFUSE to use the exclamation point after Action!, what is a punctuation character doing in the name anyway? It seems like the language is YELLING at you. Maybe that's why so many would be Action programmers are intimidated?

The September issue of Analog is out. You may have read the letter from the publisher Lee Pappas about merging Analog and ST-Log once again. He paints a pretty grim picture for both the 8bit and ST. Of course Mr. Pappas is also involved in the publication of Video Games & Computer Entertainment (VG&CE) and Laptop Computers magazines, both of which are selling like wild fire in comparison to their ROOTS magazines ST-Log and Analog. So, it's understandable that he is a bit pessimistic. I guess we won't really know for sure until the Christmas buying season begins.

Atari has promised a lot of pleasant surprises, but will they deliver? Will we see the Lynx (their portable game machine) by the end of September? Will the Portfolio see the light of day? Will Atari deliver SEVEN TIMES the amount of US advertising that they did last year? (Did you ever notice how Atari always mentions MULTIPLES of their advertising dollars? Ever wonder why? Well, it SOUNDS great, and any number times zero is still zero. So, Atari makes good public relations and saves money too! OK, seriously, it probably isn't THAT bad. But, one popular inside joke is that the fastest way OUT Atari's revolving door is to say the word ADVERTISING with in the hallowed walls of Atari Sunnyvale!)

What about the long rumored (say about 4 years or more) TT, Atari's answer to Americas demand for an affordable workstation. Hewlett Packard has licensed a company in Japan to clone their popular workstation technology, for less than \$5000 per copy. Can Atari's TT compete with that? (And we're talking a MEGAPIXEL, 1024x1024, resolution folks!) Atari makes a lot of noises at the shows, but consider this: If a tree falls in the woods and no one is there to hear it, no sound is made. Is anyone listening to Atari any more? ●

*Mat*Mat, Ratware Softworks, 32 S. Hartnett Ave., St. Louis, MO 63135.
ES. Keep those cards and letters coming. Please DON'T CALL, I seldom have time to chat on the phone, with a wife, 2 kids, a dog, a cat, college study, a full time job (with overtime lately), and a backlog of article work to the ceiling.*

Action! - Mac/65, or Where Do I Go After 8-bit BASIC?

by Ed Bachman

So you are an 8-bit Atari BASIC programmer. Are most of your programs full of USR routines? Is there something you're just itching to do that can't be done in "good ol' BASIC"? You're most likely considering another programming language. The purpose of this article is to discuss the ins, outs, and whys of what I consider to be the two best choices in a programming language for the Atari 8-bit: Action! and MAC/65. Using Action!

Action!, currently distributed by I.C.D. Inc., is a high level, compiled language. By contrast, Atari BASIC is a high level interpreted language, meaning it can run directly from the program list. Action! (like machine language) will add an extra step to your program development, the COMPILE. However, the improved performance is worth the effort.

First the good points: The most attractive feature of Action! is that it's a high level language. Ideas/functions can be easily expressed in just a few instructions, while at the same time Action! maintains a close tie to the machine level. That's important in order to get the best performance from your computer. Data can be manipulated in a wide variety of ways, and Action! supports complex math functions as well as logic level operations. This means you can handle numbers pretty much the way you did in BASIC with some "bitwise" operations that were unavailable in BASIC. A compiled Action! program will run up to 100 times faster than a basic program. Action! programs, using a "runtime library", can also be run without an Action! cartridge.

When using Action!, you must learn to "structure" your programs. Action! has no "GOTO" instruction. You must "think thru" your program and arrange it so it can be accomplished in subroutines. The subroutine, and the similar TURBO BASIC and BASIC XE "procedure" calls are very similar to the way one programs in Action!. It is also very easy to read an Action! program once you understand the language, a far cry from jumping through hundreds of GOTO's in a basic program.

On the down side.. Being a high level compiled language, you either need an Action! cart to run an Action! program or you must use a "runtime library" which you include in your program. This runtime library comes at extra cost (also from I.C.D.). The runtime library also increases the final size of your program. While there are many options available to the user during a compile, many of them are very poorly documented. Further, as your programs increase in size, you will need to make "adjustments" in the Action environment in order to handle more variable names and increased program size. While on the topic of size, after a point you MUST compile from disk, since Action! holds the compiled program resident in memory. Also, the upper practical limit of an action program is approximately 20K of compiled code. Beyond that, you must make even more "adjustments" to both your program and the Action environment. And finally, reasonable tutorials are only now becoming available.

Using the Mac/65 I know this should be "machine language", however, I feel if you decide to go the M/L route, get a Mac/65, since there is no better assembler/debugger for the Atari 8-bit. Mac/65 is also sold by I.C.D. Inc. Machine language is a "low level" language with each instruction being an actual operation performed by the 6502 processor. One simple instruction may contain hundreds of these "low level" instructions.

The good points... Machine language (ML) is also a compiled language. It is even faster than Action!, and another advantage is its relatively small size. If there is something specific you desire the Atari to do, there's no better way to do it than in the computers native tongue. Using ML allows you access to ANY level of the Atari, even places where BASIC, and sometimes Action!, won't work. Further, the 6502 (your Atari's processor) has in my opinion one of the easiest to understand instruction sets of any processor. There is no limit to the final size of your program, and unlike Action!, it can be tailored to exactly meet a very specific function. By using the MACRO feature of the MAC/65, it is also possible to create a "pseudo-high level" environment, defining a series of ML instructions to a label, which then can be used like a high level command. An ML program can be used by anyone, with or without cartridges. Further, there are fewer operating restrictions on an ML program than a compiled Action! program with runtime library. Summed up, if you want your computer to "jump thru the hoop" then ML is the way to make it do exactly what you want.

The other side of the coin... ML, being a low level language, often requires dozens of instructions to accomplish even a simple operation. ML source code listings are also more difficult to read, since each programmer may choose to perform a task in a differing manner. Since ML operates at the "machine level" or "system level", it is more difficult to debug. It's much easier to get an undesired result, since a typo often looks fine to the compiler. ML therefore adds yet another step to program development, the "debug" process (not that this isn't true with ALL program development, it's just more necessary, even a discrete step, with ML). The Mac/65 also has a few drawbacks of its own, the most notable, not being able to compile from a SpartaDOS formatted disk. Further, there is only addition/subtraction and bitwise logic available to the ML programmer, no high level math operations are supported. You must write the routine to do it if you need it, although you can use the floating point routines in the Atari ROM.

In closing...

If you're a BASIC programmer looking for more power and speed but not willing to skimp on mathematic and string features, then perhaps Action! would be best suited to your needs. If, however, you desire to get into system level functions, or need the ultimate in speed or the smallest size, then you would have no recourse but to choose ML, and preferably MAC/65.



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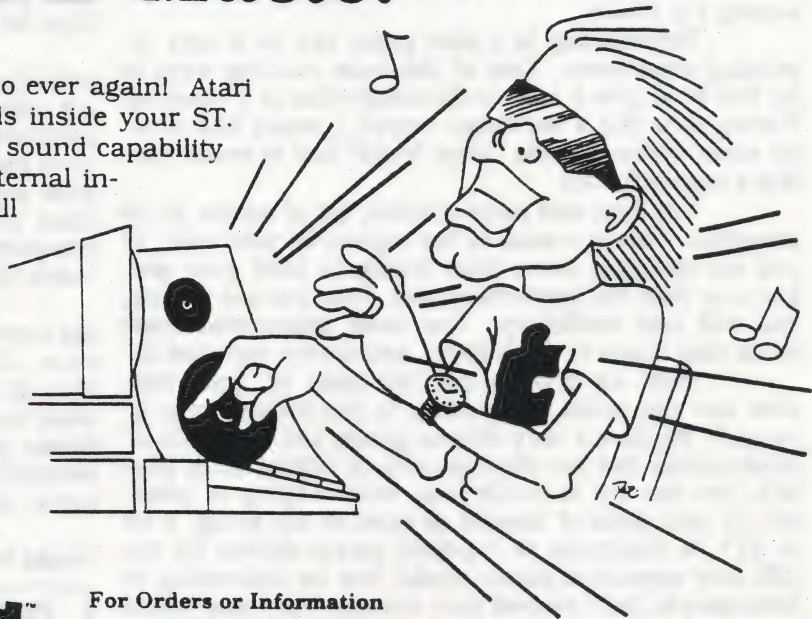
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-Ralph Mariano, ST Report



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FUTURE... continued from page 1

rived before the Texas show date, so we can't tell you yet how that show worked out.

In California, the Glendale show was well publicised before any San Jose plans were solidified. In fact, early this year, Glendale manager Tarpinian even had discussions with Tsukiji about Glendale's September date, and how, if at all, the first WOA show in Anaheim last April might affect it. Don't worry, said Richard, it's a long time between April and September, you have nothing to worry about. But by July, the San Jose date was announced, and the damage was done.

Under pressure of user group concerns, Atari appears to have asked Tsukiji to cancel his San Jose show in an attempt to make peace with the Glendale people, if not to try to save that show. It seems that the Glendale show was near and dear to the Atari Corporate heart, and the likelihood of losing it was more than Atari wanted to permit. Tsukiji did cancel his show, but it came too late to help Glendale for this fall. Some discussions are underway to see if a date later in the year could be arranged, but Tarpinian is wisely cautious, unwilling to jeopardize other committed shows.

Throughout the fray, Atari remains on the side of HAVING shows, no matter who puts them on. They have committed to appearing at any show that is sufficiently organized and publicised. WAACE is presenting an Atarifest October 7 and 8 at the Fairfax High School in Fairfax, Virginia. Washington DC area Atarifests have a good reputation for success and crowds. Also, the Kentuckiana Atari Fest is planned for Clarksville, Indiana on October 28-29. A mile out of Louisville, Kentucky, the user group show will be at the Clarksville Sheraton Lakeview. Atari is planning to send representatives to both shows.

There may simply be too many Atari shows being scheduled nationally, with little or no consideration for the vendors. Several developers have expressed to us that they can do three, perhaps four shows a year without seriously cutting into the time they need to run their businesses at home.

Rumors also abound of discontented dealers and distributors who complain that developers at Atari shows have been badly undercutting the dealer pricing to sell to users directly. While the users love it, some vendors say it unfairly depresses their market before, during, and long after any show. Proposals to remedy this include asking developers NOT to sell, or to offer discounts to local vendors so as to allow their prices to remain competitive. Richard says not a single complaint has come to his attention directly, and that he sees no need to address a problem that has not yet been directly expressed. Contrary to rumors and even to statements attributed to him by several sources, Richard now states that there will continue to be World of Atari shows, with at least three more already planned. Dates are not available at this writing.

ST-INFORMER and ZMAG/Z*Net would like to see user group shows succeed, and to that end, we are offering to help any group that is planning a show of their own. We can provide references, contacts at Atari and developers, and advise in the coordination of dates. We can also help with publicity and reporting before and at the shows. With cooperation and communication, user shows and commercial shows can co-exist without conflict or agonizing decisions for vendors and developers. If your group is considering holding an Atarifest, contact our offices. ST-INFORMER: (503) 476-0071; ZMAG/Z*NET: (201) 968-8148. ●

THE CLUB ROOM - How to Give a User Group Talk

by DAVE YEARKE (BOAST Buffalo Region Atari Group for ST)

*[Does your club do something that others can learn from? Some common problem that you have solved? Share it by sending it to Z*Net!]*

Participating in a user group can be a very rewarding experience. One of the most exciting ways to do this is to give a talk or demonstration at a meeting. Having done this a few times myself, I would like to offer some advice to avoid "stage fright" and to make your talk a successful one.

The first and most obvious, bit of advice is: be prepared! This is crucial to the success of your talk. If you are spending more time trying to boot your program or read the instruction book than you are talking, you will lose credibility. I've been unprepared more times than I care to think about, and always regretted it.

Start by considering the topic of your talk. How can you make it appealing to the widest range of people? We have a very diverse group, and while it's almost certain that not everyone will be interested in your talk, you can try to make it as wide-ranging as possible. Is your topic of interest to most of the group, 8-bit or ST? A discussion of low-level packet drivers for the OSI data communications model can be interesting to some people, but I suspect your average Atari user would be more interested in how to build an RS232 serial cable, or how the XModem protocol is used to provide error-free downloads from GENie or CompuServe.

Once you have your topic set you can begin or ganizing your ideas. Make sure your subtopics flow in a logical manner. If you digress too much, go off on too many tangents, or present a group of jumbled thoughts without structure or cohesiveness, you are sure to confuse and lose the interest of your audience. Make your self an outline or some cue cards, but don't rely totally on them, either; most people can read for themselves and have low tolerance for someone reading to them. Balance your use of written text with memorized or improvised speech.

Next, make yourself a checklist. Does your program require a joystick or other external device? Does it run in color or monochrome? Do you need MIDI cables? You can count on a one meg ST with a double sided drive, an 8-bit system, and a color monitor at most user group meetings, but anything else you might have to provide yourself. Ask your President if you are not sure. When you prepare your demonstration disk, turn off your entire system and boot from that disk. Does everything run, or did you depend on something from your hard drive or floppy to make it work correctly?

Try to keep the talk brief, informative, and to the point. We generally allow fifteen minutes to a half-hour for a talk, again ask your President what your specific group will allow. The content of the talk of course will decide the length of time required. Don't use too much time or your audience will lose interest. Also,

please watch the clock and don't run over your allotted time slot, or you will be cheating the next person out of time for their demo.

If you are showing a product, please give the publisher, price (list price as well as selling price, which are quite different), and information on where others can purchase it. Other points of interest include: what hardware configuration does it require; is it copy-protected; what interest group does the product cater to; are there other programs similar to it and, if so, how do they compare; and a statement of price versus quality (is it worth the money?)

Don't be distracted too much by people leaving the room, or by an occasional muttering from the audience. Some people will not be interested in your talk through no fault of your own, some simply do not know when to stop talking. Don't get discouraged. If the audience gets too rude, one of the group officers will say something. It is gracious of you to give your time to speak, they should be gracious enough to listen.

If you follow these few pointers, your talk should be a success. ●

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Z*NET PUBLIC DOMAIN DISKS

Beginning in October, Z*NET will be offering Public Domain disks. As we have been bringing you the latest public domain reviews in our feature "Public Domain Shelf" by Alice Amore, we will make the files we review available on disks.

The first in our series of disks will contain the first 30 issues of ST*ZMAGAZINE, our weekly ST online magazine, and recent issues of ZMAGAZINE, our 8-bit weekly online.

Each month in this spot we will include the information needed to purchase these disks. The files included on any of our disks may be used on your BBS system, club library, or general sharing, unless otherwise noted in a particular file. Some may be SHAREWARE, and we encourage you to abide by the wishes and requests of their authors. All revenues collected as a result of our sales will go towards providing a better and more varied disk service.

Our present library includes current PD SHELF material and VIDI-ST pictures from recent World of Atari shows and the demo disk we ran at the Dearborn show in June. We will also include our readers' VIDI pics and other programs offered from our participating user groups.

Watch for full details next month in Z*Net, ZMAG, and ST*ZMAG.

ZMAG BBS UPDATE

As some of you know, our regular weekly online magazines ST*ZMAGAZINE and ZMAGAZINE are offered on over 300 bulletin board systems around the country. There are even a few overseas.

In an effort to get an accurate account of all the systems, we need your help. Please send us a post card with the name of the BBS you read our magazines on. If the system carries both or just one, please make a note on the card. As we get the numbers, we will try to list them here occasionally and in the online publications at least once a month.

THE ARCHIVE BIT

1 YEAR AGO - SEPTEMBER 1988

* Diamond shown at the Glendale Show, marketed by Merrill Ward. * Oasis IV to be released * Team Software releases "A Day at The Races". * Word Perfect Offers User Groups Special. * ST Xformer uses Atari 810 and 1050 Disk Drives. * Appearance at MAGIC show cancelled by Atari.

2 YEARS AGO - SEPTEMBER 1987

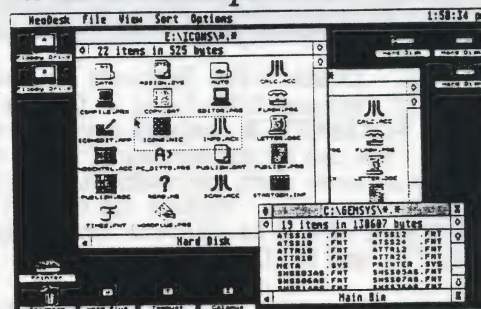
* SLM804 Announced for September release, along with Mega ST-4 * Sandy Austin and Neil Harris appear at MAGIC Show. * Atari CDROM announced for fall shipment. * Atari SX212 and XEP80 first shipment arrives at Atari warehouse. * Whitehouse Computer files for bankruptcy. * Atari XE Game System on it's way to toy stores.

3 YEARS AGO - SEPTEMBER 1986 -> PRESENT

(September 18, 1986) * Atari announces public offering of Stock at \$13.00, Atari net worth valued at 350 million dollars. (September 4, 1987) * Jack Tramiel states, "Atari is ready to become America's Consectronics Supplier", after announcement of plans to buy out the 67 store Federated Group retail electronics store. (May 31, 1989) * Atari reports 100 million dollar loss because of Federated and reports a net worth of 82 million dollars. ●

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Public Domain Shelf

by Alice Amore

DCFMT302 - Double Click Software has released DC FORMATTER, version 3.02. Long a favorite of many ST'ers, DC FORMATTER contains a variety of formatting options. You can set the number of sides, tracks, sectors, to skew or not to skew, executable boot, and step rate. Disks can also be copied. Perhaps the clearest advantage of DC FORMATTER is its ability to format disks for use with pc-DITTO and SPECTRE 128.

HDCHEK12 - Hard Disk Test and Analysis Routines, by Bill LeDuc, will inform you about the performance of your hard drive. Among the menu functions are: Boot sector info, Bad sector scan, Transfer test, Access test, Random read test, Identify devices, Update boot sector info, Set device and LUN, Set sector limits, Set drive, Print error log, Get sector, Scan files for bad sectors, and Toggle print. There is a help file within the program with explanations of all the functions. All operations are read-only.

PA_CAL11 - Personal Appointment Calendar lets you create a set of calendars that contain dates that are constant, year after year, such as birthdays, anniversaries, tax payments, health check-ups, etc. After your data has been entered, you can print out your calendar at the beginning of the month and have a full-page schedule of dates to remember. Each date block can contain up to 11 lines of 19 characters. PA-CAL was written in HiSoft BASIC by Larry Mears. The program is shareware, and source code is available for a fee.

LGSELECT - "The Little Green Selector" (LGSELECT) is an alternate GEM item selector. It has many of the features that should have been included from the start. LGSELECT is destined to become one of those shareware utilities that no one can do without. LGSELECT will install itself from an AUTO folder, or run as a program from the desktop. Since there are basic similarities between the ST's file selector and LGSELECT, learning to use most of LGSELECT's features will be instinctual. However, there are several new features, and new ways to access them. For instance, both mouse buttons are active, so the left button will give you different results than the right button.

LGSELECT is exceptional. It is shareware from Charles F. Johnson of CodeHead Software fame.

PACKER 2.0 - This could start a revolution. PACKER takes a .PRG, .TOS, or .TTP file, squeezes away about 30% of the size, then saves it to disk. The new file can be run just like the original. Most programs will PACK, and only a few won't run properly once PACKed. UNPACK, which returns the PACKed file to its original size, is included. (Editors Note: After testing the above file, I found that load times on most packed files were increased. Although file size is dramatically reduced on some PRG's, the speed you lose is noticeable and annoying to me.)

BLRUT14 - This is a collection of 20 utilities written by Bud Rasmussen in 68000 assembly language using the Assempro Assembler from Abacus. All 20 utilities are in

teractive and work in any resolution. A sampling: a one-track-at-a-time sector copier, a file copier, a text lister/printer, a directory copier, another track-at-a-time sector copier which will copy from A: to B: without prior formatting, same as previous but will format while copying, a copier/renamer, a sector-comparer of any two D/S disks, a disk information display, free memory calculation, ASCII code and scan code for any key, sector modifier, delete all files in root directory of A: or B:, directory lister for any drive, list or print all directories sorted by name or not, list or print the ASCII/hex representation for any file, list/print any directory sorted by name or not, ASCII/hex any sector, list any text file forward, backward, by line, by page.

CACHEV3 - "Cold Hard Cache, version 3.2" is a disk caching program which works with hard drives or floppies. Disk caching is a method of storing the most-used disk sectors in RAM. This increases I/O speed quite a lot. CACHEV3 can be run from the desktop or as an accessory. You may choose the drives you wish to be cached and the size of the cache (128K should suffice). CACHEV3 is shareware from Robert E. Owens, III.

FLAME_J - "Flamethrower Utility" by Tom Moore is a strange melange of useful and fun things. Its functions include: calling of the Universal Item Selector II, showing amount of free memory, setting of screen colors, setting of system date and time, set-up of printer for Epson graphic mode (960 dots), running external programs, three moire pattern shows, and a "fish tank" circle pattern maker (either round or ovoid).

STOPDRV - Created by N. Weinress, STOPDRV eliminates the frustration on Mega systems of drives that won't stop whirring during warmboots or coldboots. This program goes into the AUTO folder. It will tell your Mega to check your floppy drives during bootup to make sure they stop whirring once the boot is complete.

ADARDEMO - This is a demo of the commercial program "A Day at the Races". Special praise should be bestowed upon Team Software for giving us a demo which truly is "self-running". An animated mouse pointer moves through the entire program from beginning to end, showing all features and how they're used. The program itself looks impressive. It simulates the racetrack environment complete with digitized sounds and real-time animated horse races. Features include 9 types of wagers, 4 race types, and 4 race lengths. The database tracks up to 500 horses, 50 jockeys, and 15 players. The program is GEM-based and entirely mouse-controlled. The demo runs in low res only.

NOTICE: Last month Z*Net mentioned PRINTER DRIVERS for PRINTSHOP in this column. We were in error, and the drivers are NOT public domain, but rather commercial products of Innovative Concepts of Warren, MI (phone 313-293-0730). Programmed by Jim Steinbrecher and selling for \$14.95 each, they are a good value, but are NOT to be traded freely in the public domain. See Innovative Concepts' full page ad elsewhere in this issue of Z*Net. ●

The New Hand Scanner

Reviewed by Dr. Paul Keith

MIGRAPH INC.

Scanned art is no longer only a "canned" product for ST users. Although thousand-dollar flatbed scanners have been adapted for the Atari ST and MEGA, only now is a hand-held scanner available, and at a price that does not rule it out for serious home users. MIGRAPH has released a Hand Scanner complete with their TOUCH-UP .IMG editor software for under \$500. Touch-Up itself is a \$200 package, and current owners can buy the scanner "alone" (although upgraded software is included) for \$300



direct from Migraph.

Images collected with a scanner can really improve the content and variety in reports, newsletters, magazines, anything you might make using desktop publishing on the ST. The pictures with this review were done with the Migraph unit, and edited and titled using Touch-Up.

This scanner is larger than the "standard" Logitech scanner that you see in countless IBM/PC ads for around \$200, and is a new design. It has switches for 100, 200, 300, 400 dots per inch, a lighter-darker control, a start button, and a selector for grey scales. You can select pure black and white, or three levels of "screen" density in your grey scales. At the other end of the cord is a connector

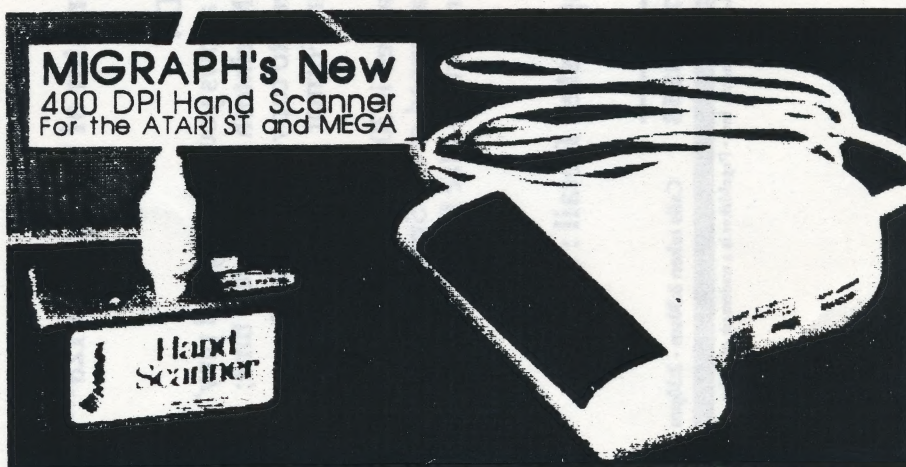
that goes to a cart to plug into the ST. It also uses its own power supply, one of those transformer-on-the-plug units.

Using the scanner requires running Touch-Up, and that requires at least a MEG of RAM. A color monitor works fine, but a monochrome monitor is better. Also, larger memory means faster operation and larger possible images, although the files made in a 1040 can, at their largest, already be too large for manipulation in a desktop publishing system.

Performance is terrific and easy, and soon after plugging it in I was able to make great .IMG files out of almost anything I had laying around. A little green light warns you if you are scanning too fast as you manually move the unit across the picture. With its four inch wide path, most images can be captured in seconds. It should be possible to splice several swipes of a larger picture together within Touch-Up, to make a full page scan. The quality of the scans is outstanding, better than I have seen from hand scanners for the Intensely Boring Machine lines.

Touch-Up itself is also upgraded now, with bolding, rotations, and a number of other improvements. Even though I had Touch-Up for many months before I bought the scanner, I had never appreciated the editing power it holds. Since almost all the IMG files I had (til now) were all ready to use and had no real need to be edited, I didn't get much out of Touch-Up. Now, I use it a lot! It works great on a large screen monitor too, with tear-away menus. Full complements of editing and "painting" features are ideal for use on fresh scans. Some critics are also happy to see that the printer port hardware "dongle" is no longer used as a protection against piracy. It didn't help keep it from being cracked, anyway.

Although it seems very expensive to occasional hobbyists, the Migraph Hand Scanner has plenty of bang-per-buck for home DTP professionals and serious amateurs. IBM users will likely flock to this package once their version is made available this fall. A cheaper version for the ST (with Touch-Up scaled down to essentials) will be released later. Migraph, (800)223-3729 or (206)838-4677. ●



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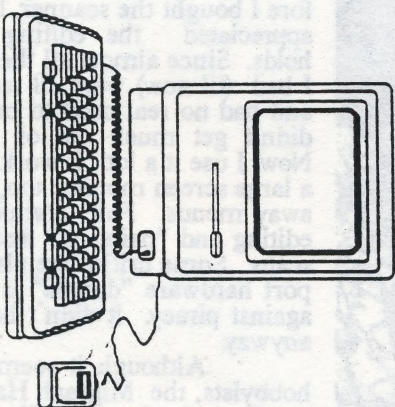
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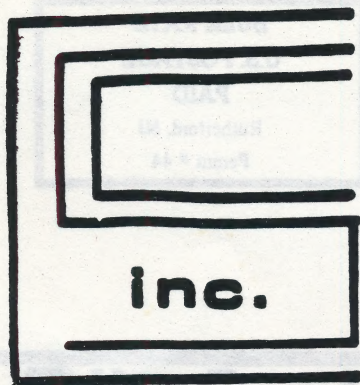
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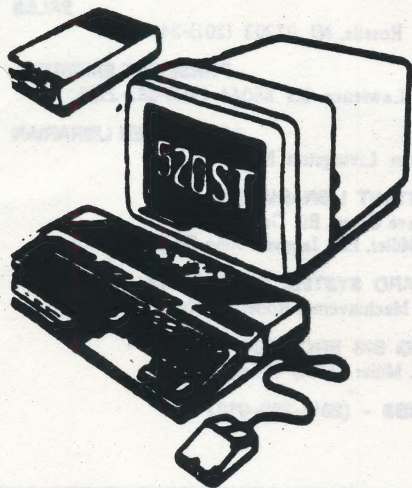


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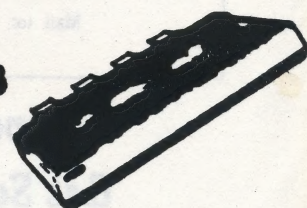
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